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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 1256
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 4258
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 1801
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RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE 5145

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 052061

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/15/2028
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: BUILDING ON ARAB LEAGUE EFFORTS

REF: STATE 49259

Classified By: NEA Acting A/S Jeffrey Feltman
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 3.
Posts should draw from the background in paragraphs 5-11 when
making this demarche.

SUMMARY

¶2. (SBU) Arab League mediation has arrested Lebanon's descent
into renewed civil war. However, the calm is fragile, the
Hizballah-led opposition and its Syrian and Iranian patrons
are emboldened, and prospects for continued dialogue are
uncertain. Additional measures are necessary to improve the
bargaining position of the Lebanese government and our March
14 allies, condemn violence as a political tool, and address
Hizballah's state-within-a-state.

OBJECTIVES

¶3. (SBU) Ambassadors should pursue the following objectives
with senior interlocutors on Friday, May 16 or as soon as
possible:

-- (SBU) Communicate our strong backing of the Arab League's
mediation of the Lebanon crisis and full support for the
agreement announced in Beirut on May 15. Express our relief
that violence has paused and dialogue resumed, but also our
strong conviction that no government should be forced to
negotiate at gunpoint.

-- (SBU) Urge public and private statements (1) condemning
Hizballah's recent actions in Lebanon, (2) expressing the
expectation that the Arab League-mediated dialogue will not
allow Hizballah to trade gains made by force for political
concessions, and (3) affirming the need to remain seized of
the issues of Hizballah's arms and its efforts to undermine
the authority of the Lebanese government and the sovereignty
of the Lebanese state. Request this message be passed
urgently and directly to the FMs in the Arab League
delegation.

-- (SBU) Urge host nations to designate Hizballah in its
entirety as a terrorist entity.

-- (SBU) Urge public and private pressure on Hizballah's
backers, Syria and Iran, to end support for Hizballah and
other terrorist groups and comply fully with relevant UNSCRs.
Measures could include recalling ambassadors for
consultations until the immediate political crisis in Lebanon
is resolved.

REPORTING DEADLINE

¶4. (U) Posts should report results by cable to Lebanon desk officer Matthew Irwin and EUR/ERA Jeffrey Giaque by Tuesday, May 20.

BACKGROUND

¶5. (C/REL) The agreement announced by Arab League FMs in Beirut on May 15 ended a paroxysm of violence after Hizballah turned its weapons against the government and citizens of Lebanon in defense of its state-within-a-state. The Arab League agreement defined the parameters for renewed Lebanese national dialogue. The Lebanese government, pro-democracy March 14 coalition, and Hizballah-led opposition agreed to end violence, return to the pre-May 5 status quo, elect current Lebanese Armed Forces commander General Michel Sleiman president, negotiate a national unity government and new electoral law, and begin a discussion of "the government's relations with various organizations" (a veiled reference to Hizballah and other militias' weapons).

¶6. (C/REL) Disagreement over whether the Arab League would be allowed to mediate discussion of these "relations" nearly

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upended negotiations. The Lebanese government and March 14, otherwise lacking leverage, insisted upon Arab League participation in any discussion of "relations"; Hizballah and its allies refused. Arab League FMs sided with the government and March 14, but the dispute presaged a difficult next round of negotiations. Dialogue now rests upon a flimsy commitment by Hizballah and its allies not to return to the streets or take up arms in pursuit of their narrow political agenda. We are skeptical that Hizballah will adhere to this commitment more faithfully than to prior commitments not to turn their weapons against their fellow Lebanese citizens. The next round of talks begins in Doha on May 16.

¶7. (C/REL) We must work with the international community to improve the bargaining position of PM Siniora, the Lebanese government, and our March 14 allies. We must also ensure that the Arab League's hard-won, if oblique, reference to Hizballah and other militias' weapons serves as a first step in a political process to address Hizballah's state-within-a-state.

¶8. (C/REL) One of the strongest, most targeted diplomatic actions that could be taken would be the designation of Hizballah in its entirety as a terrorist entity. We have requested such a designation by the EU and its members previously, but were rebuffed with claims that Hizballah is a political party or a so-called "resistance" movement. These arguments are no longer credible given Hizballah's violent attacks on the government and citizens of Lebanon in defense of its state-within-a-state, in addition to its long history of international terrorism, threats of reprisal for the death of terrorist leader Imad Mugniyah, and lethal support for Hamas and Iraqi extremists. The faade has fallen. Hizballah is a terrorist organization to its core.

¶9. (U) Hizballah in its entirety has been listed as a terrorist entity by Canada since December 2002. In addition, Hizballah's "External Security Organization" is currently listed as a terrorist entity by the UK and Australia.

¶10. (S/NF) Given recent events in Lebanon, HMG is currently considering designating Hizballah in its entirety at the request of FM Miliband.

¶11. (S/NF) We must increase pressure on Syria and Iran, who supply Hizballah with weapons, funding, and political backing. Turkey has already warned Syria that Hizballah's

actions are jeopardizing Ankara-mediated backchannel discussions with Israel over the Golan Heights. In protest of Syria's role in the Lebanon crisis, German FM Steinmeier recently cancelled a planned German-hosted conference to which high-ranking German and Syrian officials had been invited. Finally, we know that Syria worked to derail the Arab League's May 11 statement condemning the violence in Lebanon and, even when the statement was adopted, refused to participate in the mediation process despite being the titular head of the Arab League for 2008. We have long sought increased European pressure on Syria and Iran, to little or no avail. Now is the time for the international community to demand that Syria and Iran end their support for terrorist groups and comply fully with relevant UNSCRs.

POINT OF CONTACT

¶12. (U) Please contact Lebanon desk officer Matthew Irwin for any necessary further background information.

¶13. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

RICE